

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT NU

SUBJECT: EL SETENTRION MINING CO. STRIKE

SUMMARY: STRIKING WORKERS AT GOLD AND SILVER MINES NEAR LEON HAVE GONE BACK TO WORK BUT SITUATION REMAINS TENSE AND ANOTHER STRIKE IS POSSIBLE. AIFLD/CUS, ENCOURAGED BY MINLABOR CARDOZE HAS BECOME INVOLVED IN NEGOTIATIONS. END SUMMARY

1. ABOUT 850 WORKERS OF THE EL SETENTRION GOLD AND SILVER MINES IN LEON DEPARTMENT, ENGAGED IN A WILDCAT STRIKE ON APRIL 2-4. THE WORKERS, WHO WERE DEMANDING HIGHER WAGES, IMPROVED SAFETY CONDITIONS AND BETTER SOCIAL SERVICES, RETURNED TO WORK FOLLOWING A TENTATIVE AGREEMENT BY THE COMPANY TO NEGOTIATE. THE EL SETENTRION MINES ARE PRINCIPALLY OWNED BY NORANDA MINES LTD. OF CANADA AND A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF US INVESTORS (30 PCT INTEREST).

2. ALTHOUGH THE WORKERS WERE INITIALLY MOLLIFIED, THE SITUATION IS NOW VERY DELICATE BECAUSE THEY HAVE NOT BEEN PERMITTED BY THE MILITARY TO HOLD MEETINGS AND BECAUSE THEY DO NOT TRUST SOME OF THE LABOR MINISTRY-ENDORSED
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NEGOTIATORS WHO WERE OSTENSIBLY SENT TO ASSIST THEM.

THEY ARE THREATENING TO STRIKE AGAIN APRIL 24.

3. CONSCIOUS OF THE NEED FOR SUPPORT FROM A LARGER LABOR ORGANIZATION, MEMBERS OF THE MINERS' NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE APPROACHED OFFICIALS OF THE AIFLD-SUPPORTED CONFEDERATION OF LABOR UNITY (CUS) AND ASKED THEM FOR THEIR HELP IN THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE COMPANY. THE CUS WAS INITIALLY HESITANT TO ASSIST BECAUSE OF A POSSIBLE NEGATIVE REACTION FROM MINLABOR CARDOZE. BUT IN A SURPRISING TWIST CARDOZE VISITED THE HOME OF AIFLD REPRESENTATIVE FRANK MORALES ON APRIL 14, URGING THAT CUS GET INVOLVED IN THE NEGOTIATIONS BECAUSE OF THE LIMITATIONS OF THE CGT-O, THE GOVERNMENT SPONSORED CONFEDERATION, WHICH CARDOZE HAD ORIGINALLY TRIED TO UTILIZE. CARDOZE PROMISED CUS THAT THE MINERS' UNION WOULD HAVE THE FULL SUPPORT OF THE MINISTRY. HE EXPRESSED FEARS THAT IF THE DISPUTE WAS NOT SETTLED AGITATION WOULD CONTINUE AND MIGHT EVEN EXTEND TO THE MINES ON THE ATLANTIC COAST. AIFLD/CUS, WHICH HAD PROMOTED AN UNSUCCESSFUL UNION AT THE MINES TWO YEARS BEFORE, IS HOLDING SEMINARS WITH THE WORKERS IN THE HOPE OF REACTIVATING THE UNION AND ESTABLISHING A RECOGNIZED BARGAINING MECHANISM BEFORE ANARCHY SETS IN.

4. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THE GON IS HINTING THAT MARXIST STUDENT AGITATORS HAVE PRECIPITATED THE STRIKE, THE TRUTH MAY BE OTHERWISE. POOR CONDITIONS OF MINWORKERS RECEIVED SOME PUBLICITY A FEW MONTHS AGO WHEN A CONGRESSIONAL INVESTIGATING COMMITTEE TURNED UP EVIDENCE OF NONCOMPLIANCE WITH LABOR LAWS AT SOME ATLANTIC COAST MINES. LAST MONTH, PRESIDENT SOMOZA HIMSELF, DURING A STOPOVER AT THE AMERICAN-OWNED BONANZA MINE, LEARNED THAT THE WORKERS WERE NOT BEING PAID MINIMUM WAGES AND IN A HIGHLY UNCHARACTERISTIC BIT OF POPULIST DEMAGOGUERY, URGED THEM TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT. THE GON, WHICH HAS NEVER BEEN IDENTIFIED AS A FRIEND OF TRADE UNIONISM, HAS THUS BEEN PLACED IN AN UNACCUSTOMED POSITION IN THIS STRIKE.

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